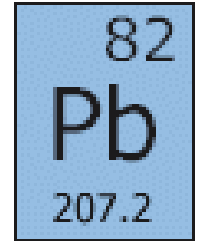


How to Protect Your Child from Lead Poisoning

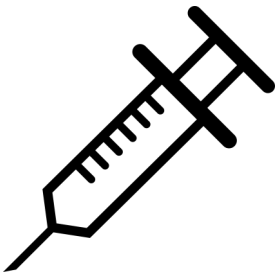
What is Lead and Where is it Found?

Lead is a naturally occurring element used in many products including—paint, ceramics, gasoline, batteries, cosmetics, pipes & plumbing, and plastics. Most often we find lead in the paint of older homes. It wasn't until 1978 that lead was banned as an additive in paint, so homes built before that date are likely to contain potential lead based paint hazards. The dust generated from the opening and closing of old painted windows and doors in older homes is the most common cause of lead poisoning in children.



What is Lead Poisoning?

Children become lead poisoned when they are exposed to lead that they ingest or inhale. It can be absorbed into the blood stream and distributed throughout the body. Lead poisoning can cause liver, kidney, and brain damage, as well as toxicity to the nervous and reproductive systems. Blood testing is one of the only ways to detect lead poisoning.



Why Do We Test Blood?

Lead poisoning can present with no obvious signs, so having your child's blood tested for lead is one of the only ways to know if they've been exposed to lead. There are two types of blood lead testing—capillary and venous. A capillary test is usually a simple finger or toe prick that tests a small amount of blood for lead. A venous test is the more accurate of the two tests and requires blood to be drawn from the vein (usually in the arm) to be tested for elevated blood lead levels. It is important to have your child tested for lead, especially if you live in an older home. The Saint Louis County DPH recommends that children in Saint Louis County be tested for lead every year until they are six years old.

What Does Your Blood Lead Test Mean?

Test Result In micrograms per deciliter (ug/dL)	Next Steps
0-4 ug/dL	<p>There is a low level of lead in your child's blood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to have your child tested every year until age six
5-15 ug/dL	<p>Your child has a level of lead in their blood that is higher than average and exceeds the threshold of concern by the CDC and the State of Missouri</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If this is the result from a capillary test, a re-test with a venous draw should be performed If this is the result of a venous test, a nurse from the Saint Louis County DPH will be in contact with you regarding the results and to provide information to bring these levels down Continue to have your child tested every year until age six
15-44 ug/dL	<p>This blood lead level is high and requires action from Saint Louis County DPH—Healthy Homes Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If this is the result from a capillary test, a re-test with a venous draw must be performed The Saint Louis County DPH—Healthy Homes Program will be in contact about setting up a Risk Assessment to identify sources of lead and how to protect your child from lead poisoning Continue to have your child tested every year until age six
>44 ug/dL	<p>There is an urgent need to address this very high blood lead level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If this is a capillary test, a venous draw MUST be taken within 48 hours Your doctor and the DPH will be in contact with you about these results Medical treatment must be started right away

How to Protect Your Child from Lead Poisoning

Lead in Paint—Lead was used as an additive in paint until it was banned in the United States in 1978. Homes built before that date have a high likelihood for potential lead-based paint hazards. Children who reside in older homes, have a greater risk for lead poisoning. Lead dust, generated from lead paint in older homes is the most common route of exposure to lead for children. Friction surfaces, like old painted windows and doors, in older homes generate lead dust with their opening and closings. This dust is not visible to the naked eye. It can get on the hands and toys of small children and into their mouths through normal hand to mouth behavior.



There are special cleaning procedures and lead-safe work practices that you can use to help protect your child from lead in older homes. **Lead poisoning is preventable.**

Lead in Soil—Soil near the exterior of older homes and the side of the road can have levels of lead in them that are unsafe. Lead in gasoline for cars was not banned until 1986, so idling cars on the street deposited lead into the soil that made it a lead hazard. To prevent exposure to lead from soil, there are simple steps that you can take.

- Take your shoes off when entering the home, so as to not track in lead dust or soil from your shoes inside
- Use raised beds with fresh soil when planting or growing food in your home garden
- Keep bare soil around exterior of your older home covered to prevent it from being used as a play area. Coverings could include mulch, rocks, ornamental plants or grass, concrete and stone



The Saint Louis County DPH offers soil testing for county residents in our environmental laboratory. For information on how you can get your soil tested, contact the Environmental Health Laboratory at 314-615-8324.



Lead in Water— Lead rarely occurs naturally in water sources like rivers and lakes. Water's exposure to lead likely comes from lead service lines underneath the home, solder that connects copper piping, and brass fixtures. There is no way to see, taste, or smell water that contains lead. Water needs to be tested in a laboratory for lead contamination to be confirmed.

Steps you can take reduce the potential for lead in your water include—

- Purchasing a water filter for your faucet. Must be NSF/ANSI standard 53 certified for lead reduction
 - Use cold water for all your cooking and drinking needs in the home. Warm water can more easily absorb lead than cold water
- Flush your water lines routinely, especially after periods of little use
 - Clean your faucet aerators periodically to prevent any potential build up

If you're worried about potential lead contamination of your water, the Saint Louis County DPH also offers drinking water testing through our Environmental Health Laboratory. Call 314-615-8324 for more information.

Lead in Other Products—Lead can be found in some consumer products in addition to paint, soil, and water. Toys, candy, folk medicine, toy jewelry and ceramics are some of the products known to contain lead. While lead was banned in paint and other products in the US in 1978, items not manufactured in the United States can contain potential lead hazards. For information on products that have been recalled due to lead and other hazards, visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at www.cpsc.gov



If you have questions about lead poisoning prevention or lead hazards, please contact the Saint Louis County Department of Public Health's Healthy Homes Program at 314-615-5323. Lead Poisoning is Preventable.